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ABSTRACT

The stated purpose of these materials is to help educators accomplish four tasks: (1) identify "appropriate" instructional resources for disadvantaged students in vocational classes; (2) use an objective checklist to evaluate a resource's "usefulness" (a sample checklist is provided); (3) use criteria to evaluate a resource's "outstandingness" (a sample evaluation instrument is provided); and (4) review materials throughly and consistently (a set of reviewer guidelines are provided). Sections in this document include a rationale for evaluating resources, definitions (e.g., disadvantaged persons, target areas, "appropriate" resources, "usefulness", and "outstandingness"), considerations for resource evaluation, using the instructional resource checklist for usefulness, using the criterion-based evaluation form for "outstandingness", and implementing review procedures. (JH)

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTE: 12p. evaluation form, sample criteria, guidelines

ABSTRACT: The intent of this brief is to provide educators with information/documents needed to evaluate instructional resources for disadvantaged students in vocational classes

The package is designed to help educators accomplish four tasks: (1) identify "appropriate" instructional resources for disadvantaged students in vocational classes; (2) use an objective checklist to evaluate a resource's "usefulness"; (3) use criteria to evaluate a resource's "outstandingness"; (4) review materials thoroughly and consistently.

The benefits from any evaluation process generally accrue to all concerned, if done in a constructive, deliberate manner. The purpose of looking closely at an instructional resource is not to point out its defects; rather, it is to determine what else is needed to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged vocational students.

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Evaluating Resources for Disadvantaged Students

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in brief

This package of materials is designed to help you accomplish these four tasks:

- Identify instructional resources "appropriate" for educationally disadvantaged vocational students.
- Use a checklist to evaluate a resource's "usefulness."
- Use criteria to evaluate a resource's "outstandingness."
- Review materials thoroughly and consistently.

These tasks are essential components of the major goal of this learning package:

GOAL:

To provide you with the information/documents you need to evaluate instructional resources for disadvantaged students in vocational classes.

Before attacking the tasks necessary to accomplish this goal, you may want to ask the following questions:

- *"Why should I evaluate vocational materials especially for disadvantaged students?"*

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- *"What experience/qualifications/ knowledge do you have that will help me?"*

- *"What, exactly, do you mean by 'appropriate,' 'useful,' and 'outstanding,'? And who are included in 'the disadvantaged'?"*

When we have answered these questions for you in the Rationale, Background, and Definitions sections, you will be ready to begin.

rationale

Failure in school, failure to obtain a job, and failure to keep low-level, unskilled jobs when obtained are both cause and effect of persons "at a disadvantage" in today's society. A significant portion of Maryland's adult population have been academically and economically disadvantaged since preschool years. They, in turn, create learning environments that predispose their children to the same failures. By the time many of these children are junior and senior high school students, they are simply fulfilling everyone's--including their own--expectations.

Most of these students will not succeed on their own. They need professional assistance, effectively and concertedly planned, to achieve any measureable success. Educators must foster change through an essentially changed attitude. It is not the student's responsibility to adapt to fixed teaching methods and materials; rather, it is the educator's responsibility to achieve the flexibility needed to meet individual student needs.

background

One of the most serious problems in meeting specific educational needs of disadvantaged students is locating suitable curriculum resources. The Maryland Vocational Curriculum Research & Development Center, through contracts with the State Department of Education, has conducted a national search, collected and evaluated resources, and compiled resources guides to materials for disadvantaged, handicapped, and bilingual students. Our experiences, as a Center, in searching for materials, designing an Instructional Resource Checklist, and identifying outstanding vocational materials are helpful to all vocational educators concerned with incorporating appropriate educational services for the disadvantaged.

definitions

1. Identification of a "Disadvantaged" Person:

The Federal Register (Final Rules and Regulations for the Vocational Amendments of 1976, Section 104.804, October 3, 1977) classifies disadvantages into two categories:

(a) academic disadvantage: lacks reading, writing, and math skills; performs below grade level.

(b) economic disadvantage: family income below national poverty level;

unemployed; receiving public assistance; institutionalized. These categories included persons who have limited English-speaking ability and require special services, assistance, or programs in vocational training.

2. Target Areas for the Disadvantaged:

Areas which may be expected to have a high percentage of disadvantaged individuals include the following:

- economically depressed communities
- areas of high youth unemployment
- areas of high rates of school dropouts
- city ghettos
- public housing developments
- urban renewal areas
- model cities neighborhoods
- rural poverty areas
- Mexican-American barrios
- Puerto Rican enclaves
- American Indian reservations
- migrant streams

3. Conditions/Characteristics of General Education Deficiency:

- speaking/comprehension deficiency
- reading/writing deficiency
- computational deficiency
- low achievement scores
- poor attendance records
- school dropout (or potential)
- unawareness of educational procedures and/or opportunities
- minimal parental support and guidance because of parents' lack of education

4. Conditions/Characteristics of Behavioral Problems:

- significant incidence of involvement with the criminal justice system
- defiance of rules and regulations
- persistence in trying to dominate the scene
- withdrawal from normal social intercourse
- unrestrained behavior
- socially assertive and unconventional behavior
- disruptiveness in shcool
- no interest in schoolwork
- negative attitude toward learning
- discouragement in schoolwork
- lack of personal motivation
- persistent truance from home and school
- poor relationship with others
- negative self-image
- oversensitivity to constructive criticism
- lack of experience with successful examples of own ethnic group
- underachievement
- poor nutrition and health
- out-of-wedlock pregnancies
- underemployment
- broken homes

5. Considerations of "Appropriate" Resources:

Features which should be considered when selecting "appropriate" vocational resources for disadvantaged students include: (1) subject area coverage, (2) age group, (3) cost effectiveness, (4) special features designed for learning difficulties, and (5) adaptability of format for special needs.

6. Instructional Resource Checklist - or "Usefulness."

The MVCRDC developed a checklist for evaluating instructional resources, field tested it in 1978, and revised it in 1979. Such a checklist is a quick way to assess suitability of materials for any target population. This resulted in three modifications of the original form which were adapted to the evaluation of vocational materials for handicapped, disadvantaged, and bilingual

students. Categories included on the checklist are useability, format, readability, content, subjective comments, and overall recommendations. The Instructional Resource Checklist is FORM #1 at the end of this package.

7. Criterion-Based Evaluation Form - for "Outstandingness":

The Instructional Resource Checklist proviously described is designed only to critique a resource's "usefulness." To critique a resource's "outstandingness," an evaluation instrument such as the one developed by the Center, FORM #2, can be used. Specific criteria must be developed and field-tested by critiquing those resources judged to be outstanding in an actual classroom situation with adisadvantaged students.

how to begin

Before you can begin to review either the usefulness or outstandingness of vocational resources for teaching disadvantaged students, you must first identify the resources available. Publishers' catalogs are the most common source.

Look for those features previously defined as considerations of appropriate instructional resources.

The subject coverage you expect from a particular resource will vary with your teaching situation: *Do you want a main teaching tool in a specific curriculum area for a self-contained classroom or a supplement to be used in a tutoring situation?*

Look for the age group for which the resource is intended. Ages and social/emotional maturity levels of the students are important considerations, as are academic grade levels. For example, a text intended to build reading skills in vocational areas should present characters, stories, examples that the students can relate to their own lives, rather than Dick-Jane-Sally dialogues in vocational settings. Conversely, a human relations text for high school students should deal with work-situation problems at a job-entry level, rather than top management-personnel decisions.

Weigh the cost of the resource against the number of times it will be used and the number of students who will used it. Consider the following: Replacement costs if components are consumable, hardware needed if the resource is non-print, durability, and attractiveness and manageability of the complete package.

For any group of learners, subject area coverage, age group, and cost-effectiveness are always considerations in the purchase of curriculum resource. Many of the questions these considerations create will be answered in publishers' catalogs. Unfortunately, the special features needed for the disadvantaged

are often not easily identified in the catalog description. Concerns such as pacing, instructional sequence, performance objectives, immediate feedback, readability level, high interest motivators, and large print are often overlooked. Even though a resource may not be advertised or designed especially for disadvantaged students, it may be useable. Without the resource itself to review, some signal phrases that suggest possible suitability include the following:

- high interest
- low reading level
- step-by-step progression
- basic, introductory
- simple, easy-to-learn
- low level vocabulary
- individualized, competency-based

Beyond these descriptors, read closely for anything that suggests material or format especially geared to motivate students who long ago "turned off" to the education system. Cartoons, ethnically-oriented commentation, slang phrases, and any highly creative or unique approaches to teaching vocational subject matter may help "turn on" reluctant learners.

using the checklist

As you read about using the Instructional Resource Checklist, study the sample provided.

Intended Use. A vocational educational resource may be designed primarily for students, as professional development for teachers and administrators, or for all if a comprehensive teacher's manual is included as part of a learning package. If intended for students, the resource may be designed for individual or group instruction on a secondary, post-secondary, or adult basic education level.

Features for Disadvantaged Students. A resource designed to meet the needs of the disadvantaged ideally will do the following:

- develop self-worth
- develop world of work concept
- promote development of psychomotor skills
- provide immediate feedback
- use a modifiable instructional format
- reinforce positive personal/social behavior

Instructional Format. Items teachers would find helpful in most formats include the following:

- subject index
- bibliography/references
- performance objectives
- student activities
- student work sheets
- review questions
- answer key
- teacher's handbook/manual

Print Format. Before ordering any print material, a teacher may want to know if it is hardbound, paperbound, looseleaf, stapled, or bound with a plastic spine. Number of pages may also be an influential factor, since a large, thick text may discourage students before opening the cover.

Nonprint Format. Nonprint materials include film loops/strips of various millimeter sizes, reel-to-reel films, slides, cassettes, transparencies, and games. Length of time and color versus black/white are other variables.

Readability. This includes more than grade level, based on word difficulty and sentence length. Other characteristics of readability appropriate for the handicapped include large print, double columns, generous paragraph spacings, and high interest motivators such as drawings, photographs, charts and color.

Description. No checklist is comprehensive enough to adequately cover all the content possible in vocational subjects. Space must be provided for a reviewer to describe subject coverage, topical areas, general pacing, and adequacy of the general instructional sequence -- information which can be conveyed in short, concise sentences that are easily understood.

Prerequisite Student Skills. Another part of the content that affects the teaching/learning process is any prerequisite knowledge or skills that students are expected to have as a foundation for new material. Some assumed prerequisites might include vocational training, math skills, and writing skills.

Comments. Besides a description of content and objective checklist of useability, format, and readability, some evaluation judgements about the quality of the resource need to be made. These include elaboration of items checked or not checked in various sections of the checklist. For example, if "develops world of work concept" is not checked, the reviewer may want to explain how the resource neglects to do this in a vocational subject area. On the other hand, if "modifiable instructional format" is checked, the reviewer may want to comment on how it may be advantageously modified. Other questions to address in the Comments section may include: *Are vocational opportunities and job experiences presented realistically? Are characters, fashions, vehicles, themes, soundtracks, etc., comtemporary? Is new vocabulary clearly defined and repeatedly presented?*

Overall Recommendation. Based upon the checklist and the reviewer's general impression of the resource, the instructional material may be recommended or not recommended

using the criteria

FORM 2 illustrates sample criteria that may be included on a criterion-based evaluation instrument. Each resource can be rated on the criteria and achieve a certain number of points toward a total score. "Outstanding" resources accumulate 80% of the total points. "Useful" or "acceptable" resources accumulate 60% of the total points.

Below 60%, an instructional resource is judged "unsuitable."

However, not *all* criteria are appropriate for *all* resources, *all* students, or *all* situations. For example, readability criteria are not appropriate for cassette tapes. Programmed instruction criteria are not appropriate for a group educational game. Criteria for students with poor reading skills may not be appropriate for unmotivated students with short attention spans. Criteria for a good supplementary text for an entire class of students of varying abilities may not apply to a text for individual use with a tutor.

To account for these discrepancies when evaluating resources, "Not Applicable" is included for many of the criteria. Yet, even with this safeguard against penalizing resources because they are more narrowly, specifically designed for certain uses, resources may be rated low if they do not conform to certain notions of the "ideal" -- even if that ideal is not always suitable.

Although the applicability of criteria for "outstandingness" is not universal, the total lack of materials that even approach the standard is phenomenal, if the experience of our Center's search is typical. Some glaring deficiencies we have discovered are listed below. Many resources seem to lack the following:

- lower reading level
- high interest
- easy-to-read layout/print
- immediate feedback
- clear student performance objectives
- student supplemental and review activities
- step-by-step progression
- pre and post tests
- unbiased material

implementing review procedures

As a prerequisite to examining curriculum materials to be used for the disadvantaged, you may need certain guidelines and/or training to demonstrate the following:

- awareness of essential features/characteristics to evaluate
- understanding of ecudation terminology
- consistency with other reviewers in both <u>what</u> is examined and <u>how critical</u> the examination is

You may want to test yourself with the following questions regarding essential features of curriculum materials.

> *How aware am I of traditional sex-role stereotyping? Am I sensitive to consistent use of the masculine he/his and pictures dominated by males as managers and females as secretaries? Would I notice illustrations exhibiting mostly Caucasian faces? Would I be offended at a story where Pedro always ate tocas and worked as a custodian?*

Ask yourself these questions concerning your understanding of educational terminology.

Given a textbook, would I be able to find an example of favorable work attitudes/habits being developed in the reader? Can I describe how the student's self-worth concept might be enhanced by a film? Do I understand the importance of immediate feedback and how it can be provided by a transparency?

In order to achieve consistency in examination when many people evaluate resources, reviewers should evaluate several resources conjointly to learn how they may evaluate differently from one another. Their evaluations originate from different prespectives concerning the focus of their comments, different understandings of how positive personal/social behavior is reinforced, or different tolerance levels for not-quite-appropriate instructional objectives. Reviewers may differ in willingness to rate a resource "not recommended." Their different writing styles may be too apparent in the Description section, since a large continumm exists between a flowery, verbose style and an abbreviated style. These differences should be resolved to promote uniformity. Guidelines for reviewers such as suggested in FORM 3 may help in this resolution.

in summary

The benefits from any evaluation process generally accrue to all concerned, if done in a constructive, deliberate manner. The purpose of looking closely at an instructional resource is *not* to point out its defects; rather, it is to determine *what else* is needed to meet the needs of educationally disadvantaged vocational students. This may mean supplementing texts with worksheets, films, tapes, and activities to accommodate a variety of learning styles in a class with a wide range of individual abilities. It may mean going through catalogs to see what else is available or taling to other vocational teachers to learn what else is being used. It may mean providing feedback to publishers concerning what is outstanding, what is minimally acceptable, and what is totally unsuitable -- and why. It should mean watching individual students progress to see what else can be provided.

Identifying and installing appropriate educational services for disadvantaged students has been a continuing concern of vocational educators in the state of Maryland. Their concern and efforts reflect increased federal and state financial support to help persons of all ages in all communities have ready access to vocational training or retraining. Evaluating *appropriate* instructional resources is only one way you can help develop abilities of students and enable them to achieve success in the vocational education program of their choice.

references

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Kay, Evelyn K., Barbara H. Kemp, and Frances G. Saunders. Guidelines for Identifying, Classifying, and Serving The Disadvantaged and Handicapped Under the Vocational Edcuation Amendments of 1968. Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973. DHEW Publication No. (OE) 73-11700.

form 1

TITLE

AUTHOR

SOURCE

SUBJECT AREA

FEATURES FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

0 develops self-worth concept
0 develops world of work concept
0 promotes development of psycho-motor skills
0 provides immediate feedback
0 modifiable instructional format
0 reinforces positive personal/social behavior

PRINT MATERIAL FORMAT

0 hardbound
0 paper bound
0 loose leaf
0 stapled
0 plastic spine
0 number of pages: _____

MATERIAL READABILITY

0 large print format
0 double column copy
0 generous paragraph spacing
0 high interest level motivator_____
0 reading level _____grade
0 reading level: professional

ILLUSTRATIONS

0 drawings/cartoons
0 photographs
0 charts/graphs
0 B/W
0 color

INTENDED USE

0 student resource
0 teacher resource
0 administrator resource
0 individual instruction
0 group instruction
0 secondary
0 post-secondary

INSTRUCTIONAL FORMAT

0 subject index
0 bibliography/references
0 performance objectives
0 student activities
0 student work sheets
0 review questions
0 answer key
0 teacher's handbook/manual

NON-PRINT MATERIAL FORMAT

0 film loop/strip 8mm
0 film loop/strip 16mm
0 film reel-to-reel 8mm
0 film reel-to-reel 16mm
0 35mm slide
0 35mm slide w/cassette
0 length _____min.
0 OH projectuals
0 color
0 B/W
0 games
0 other _____

VCRD

12

form 2

A SELECTED SAMPLE OF

CRITERIA FOR OUTSTANDING VOCATIONAL CURRICULUM MATERIALS

FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS

Title: _____ Source: _____

Author: _____

Copyright Date: _____

AVCRDC EVALUATION: _____ Outstanding

_____ Acceptable

_____ Unsuitable

Cost: _____

Instructions: More than one comment may be checked per category.

I. Readability — Points Possible* 5

A. Technical/vocational vocabulary or concepts

____2 reinforced by explanation (illustrations, examples, activities)
____2 highlighted (bold letters, framed, repeated, sound difference)
____1 adequately defined
____0 new vocabulary/concepts not defined

Total _____
Total Possible 11*

II. Format

A. Fairness to all people — 3

____1 racial equity
____1 racial equity not applicable
____0 race bias shown
____1 sex equity
____1 sex bias not applicable
____0 sex bias shown
____1 cultural equity
____1 cultural equity not applicable
____0 cultural bias shown

B. Consummables — 2

____2 can be reproduced at minimum cost
____1 must be reordered from vendor--not difficult/expensive to replace
____0 must be reordered--difficult and expensive to replace
____2 not applicable

Total _____
Total Possible 16*

III. Objectives

A. Desirable characteristics of objectives — 3

____1 appropriate for disadvantaged students
____1 achievement measured by post tests
____1 written in behavioral terms
____0 none

Total _____
Total Possible 4*

Grand Total _____
Grand Total Possible 45*

SCALE	45 - 35	Outstanding
	34 - 22	Acceptable
	21 - 0	Unsuitable

* The "total possible points" reflects the points that could be awarded when applying other subheading not included in this sample.

form 3

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS
EVALUATING RESOURCES FOR THE HANDICAPPED & DISADVANTAGED

Description

- Is the resource racially, culturally, and/or sexually stereotyped?
- What are the components of the resource? (worksheets, cassettes, filmstrips, etc.)
- What are the primary topical areas or subdivisions?
- What is the general pace of the resource? (fast, moderate, slow)
- Are the components packaged with durability, attractiveness and manageability in mind?
- What is the general instructional sequence? (pretest-presentation-posttest, etc.)
- What specialized equipment is needed for non-print media presentation? (LaBelle format, video cassette, etc.)

Comments

- Does the resource *look* like it is valid for its intended purpose? (high face validity)
- Is new vocabulary clearly explained and presented?
- Is new vocabulary repeatedly presented? (For the MR population, repetition must be made 3 or 4 times to be helpful.)
- Are the learning increments or steps appropriate? (no gaps or leaps in presentation)
- Does the resource attempt to present too many concepts per unit time?
- Are examples and experiences true-to-life and realistic?
- Are characters, vehicles, themes, soundtracks, styles, etc. contemporary?
- Is the resource cost-effective in usefulness, presentation, and content?

Prerequisite Student Skills

- What type and amount of training or experience is assumed?
- What arithmetic or calculating skills are assumed?
- What reading and writing skills are assumed?